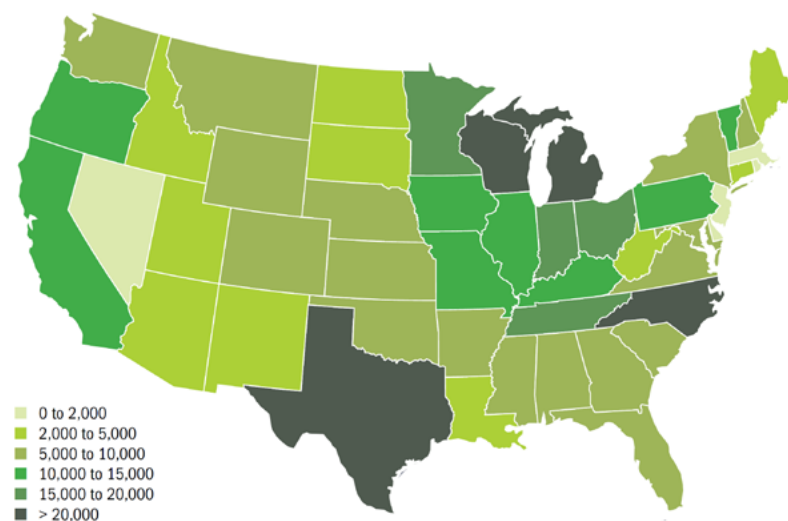


Supporting Rural Communities with Energy Efficiency Policies

Energy efficiency policies and programs can be used to reduce rural energy costs, which means more money stays in local communities instead of going to pay utility bills. Efficiency improvements also reduce operating costs for businesses and farmers, and they allow local institutions to reinvest utility-bill savings into their missions. In 2017, the energy efficiency industry employed over 300,000 rural workers across the U.S., and several states emerged as hubs for rural clean energy jobs (see figure 1). State legislators, regulators, and policymakers can use energy efficiency policies to bring multiple benefits to the residents, farms, businesses and other institutions that make up America's rural communities.

An energy burden is the percentage of annual household income spent on energy bills. Efficiency can save rural residents up to \$400 on their utility bills annually and alleviate up to 25% of a household's energy burden.

FIGURE 1: TOTAL RURAL CLEAN ENERGY JOBS 2017



The District of Columbia, Delaware, New Jersey, and Rhode Island have no areas designated as nonmetropolitan by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and thus their numbers are not included in this map.

Source: E2¹

State leaders can support rural community members with a variety of energy efficiency policies:²

- **Use geographic equity-based performance metrics and/or offer incentives to energy efficiency program administrators for reaching rural customers.**
- **Design energy-savings targets to help munis and co-ops succeed, such as by allowing these utilities to collaboratively administer efficiency programs and meet energy-savings targets.**
- **Coordinate statewide on rural energy efficiency programs across multiple utilities and program administrators.**
- **Measure the rural economic impacts of energy efficiency policies, such as by quantifying job creation and economic output.**
- **Improve the energy efficiency of rural homes, and then electrify their heating sources to reduce their dependence on petroleum fuels. Leverage these activities as part of broader state efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and invest in beneficial electrification.**
- **Use federal, state taxpayer, and ratepayer dollars to leverage private capital for rural energy efficiency projects.**

Energy Efficiency Policies Produce Tangible Benefits for Rural Residents

Cave Junction, Oregon

Kelpie Wilson and George Shook worked with Energy Trust of Oregon (ETO) to design and construct a highly efficient home that will save them \$1,900 in annual energy costs. "Our home is warm, cozy and oh so quiet," said Wilson. "And with Energy Trust incentives, it didn't cost any more than standard construction." ETO delivers energy efficiency programs on behalf of several Oregon electric and gas utilities, and it measures the success of these programs against rural-focused performance metrics.³



Vergennes, Vermont

Simone Colby and her kids live in a high-performance modular home, which uses 75% less energy than traditional modular homes and will save them \$3,000 in annual energy costs. Colby said, "This winter, my family is toasty warm and I'm not worrying about the fuel bills." Efficiency Vermont—the statewide energy efficiency utility—built this home for Colby and works to fairly distribute energy efficiency benefits for electric ratepayers across the state.⁴



Endnotes

- 1 E2 (Environmental Entrepreneurs). 2019. "Clean Jobs Rural America." February 2019. e2.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/E2-Clean-Jobs-Rural-America-2019.pdf
- 2 To learn more about energy efficiency policies that benefit rural communities, see ACEEE's new report, Supporting Rural Communities with State Energy Efficiency Policy: www.aceee.org/research-report/u2012. To learn more about the energy efficiency performance of all 50 states, see ACEEE's latest State Energy Efficiency Scorecard: www.aceee.org/research-report/u2011.
- 3 Energy Trust of Oregon. 2018. "2018 Annual Report." Accessed December 23, 2020. www.energytrust.org/2018-annual-report/
- 4 Efficiency Vermont. "Partnership to help Vermonters who need it most." Accessed December 23, 2020. www.aceee.org/research-report/u2011